

Dispatch



King County

Department of Transportation

KCDOT employees are enjoying healthy commutes

Taking the bus, bicycling and walking to work are great ways to incorporate exercise and stress reduction into your daily routine. These and other alternatives to driving alone also support county goals: reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and easing traffic congestion. Would you like to try a greener, more healthful commute? The Department of Transportation has plenty of role models. Read about a few of them below.

Getting there by bike and boat

The bicycle rack at Metro's Ryerson Base is well-used. Two of the employees who park their bikes there every day are Marvin Green and Don



Don MacAdam (L) and Marvin Green.

MacAdam, who also rely on ferries.

For the past eight years, Don, a mechanic, has been bicycling from his Bainbridge Island home to the ferry terminal, then from Seattle's Colman Dock to the base.

Marvin bikes six miles from his home in Manchester on the Kitsap Peninsula, takes the Kitsap foot ferry to the Bremerton ferry dock, ferries to Seattle, then bikes the last leg to Ryerson. He has been commuting this way for 16 years, and has been an avid cyclist for 37. Marvin is an equipment service worker for Metro.

"You have to be really watchful to stay safe," he advised. Other tips Marvin and Don suggest for would-be riders: get a good quality bicycle, have

it set up correctly, make sure you've got the right kind of tire for your commute, and don't cross railroad tracks on the diagonal — go straight across.

Vanpooling since 1986

Rick Stiles is on his fifth van; he has been driving a Metro vanpool for 22 years. Rick starts in Federal Way, makes a couple of stops to pick up fellow Metro employees Randy Richards, Renae Roberson, Cathy Johnson, Dan Nelson, Craig Phinney, and Joel Mamaril, and arrives in Tukwila by 5:45 a.m. All work in Metro's Component Supply Center or South Facilities.

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Vanpoolers (L to R) Randy Richards, Renae Roberson, Cathy Johnson, Craig Phinney, Joel Mamaril, and Rick Stiles.



Hundreds of KCDOT employees take the bus to work. Just two of the many reasons why that's a smart choice:

It automatically increases the amount of walking you do.

Nearly one-third of transit users meet the surgeon general's recommendations for at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day solely by walking to and from transit.*

It shrinks your carbon footprint. A single person, commuting alone by car, who switches a 20-mile round trip commute to existing public transportation, can reduce his or her annual CO₂ emissions by 4,800 pounds per year.**

* Besser LM, Dannenberg AL. Walking to public transit: steps to help meet physical activity recommendations. *Am J Prev Med.* Nov 2005;29(4):273-280.

** Public Transportation's Contribution to U.S. Greenhouse Gas Reduction, Science Applications International Corporation, September 2007.

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Healthy commutes

Riders have come and gone over the years, but most of the current group have been commuting together for a decade. They enjoy traveling and visiting with one another—but don't bother asking for details, because Rick jokes that this vanpool has a rule: "What's said in the van stays in the van."

Walking the talk

"I look at the time I spend walking not as a waste of time but as a gain of time," says Sunny Knott. Rain or shine, Sunny walks from her home in Seattle's Central Area to the Yesler Building, where she works as a transportation planner with Metro's Market Development group.

"Walking gives me time to myself—good silent time," she said.

Another walker is Julia Turney, an environmental engineer with the Road Services Division, who walks the mile and a half between her apartment on Seattle's First Hill and King Street Center.

Both she and Sunny have been "pedacommuting" for several years. Besides the quiet time, they like the convenience and the way walking helps them keep tabs on neighborhood changes. They say their walks are good exercise, too, although not enough to keep them completely in shape; they do other workouts as well.

And they agree that the bus is a great option when they want a lift—like the time the weekly market basket Julia carries home contained a heavy watermelon.

Margaret Holwegner, an engineer in the Road Services Division, has been bicycling from her East Bellevue home to work at the King Street Center for four years. That's 13.8 miles each way. In fact, she bicycles everywhere—errands, dentist's office, even Costco. She hauls groceries in a "kid cart." It has a 150-pound capacity, so she calculates the weight of items as she shops.

Margaret has figured out lots of tricks for managing the bike commute. She chooses wrinkle-resistant work clothing that she rolls and carries

Train, VanShare combo gets cars off the road

"We absolutely love it," Peggy Richards said of her Metro VanShare group. She and eight other employees of the Fleet Administration and Road Services divisions—Cindy Kittleson, Kathleen Bishop, Tom Hilton, Greg Kinney, Jo Rux, Tony Hales, Steve VanSickle and Dan Orsini—all start work early at the Renton roads maintenance complex.

When Sound Transit added an early-morning Sounder train last year, they were able to stop driving solo to work. Now the group members catch the train at various stops, then meet up at the Tukwila Sounder station and drive a VanShare van the five miles to the Renton facility.

"It saves me tons of money," said Kathleen Bishop, who is a Fleet inventory purchasing specialist. Kathleen walks from her home to the Auburn train station, and her Flexpass covers the Sounder fare. The VanShare group divvies up the \$55-a-month charge for the van, and each rider chips in \$20 a month for gas.

The VanShare members get off work around 3 p.m., so they have to wait a while for the 3:51 p.m. train to take them home. But they can read or nap, and anyway the dollars saved and the stress-free commute make the wait worthwhile. "One of the men in the group says he gets home later than he used to, but he is so much more relaxed. He's not arriving home mad about traffic," said Peggy.

in a backpack. She has four bicycles for different conditions, including one with fenders for winter use and a lighter one for summer. The day we photographed Margaret she was riding a single-gear bicycle.

Her tip for anyone who wants to start pedaling to work: Don't try to do it all at once.

"If you're just starting, ride partway and catch the bus," she said. "Metro has very good bike racks that are easy to use, and the drivers will help."



Sunny Knott



County transportation benefits can help you go green, get healthy

King County's employee transportation benefits support commute options that are good for you and good for the environment. Below is some basic information. For details, visit www.metrokc.gov/employees/transportation or call the Employee Transportation Coordinator at 206-263-4575.

Transit

Your employee ID/FlexPass provides unlimited rides on Metro Transit, Community Transit, Pierce Transit, and Sound Transit regular bus service; Sounder commuter rail regular service; the Seattle Streetcar; and the Elliot Bay Water Taxi.

Vanpool

Your ID/FlexPass covers up to \$45 per month toward vanpool fare. Visit www.RideshareOnline.com, or call 206-625-4500 or 1-800-427-8249.

Bike/Walk

Employees who commute primarily by bicycling or walking can earn a monthly incentive worth \$20.

Carpool

Employees who work outside of downtown Seattle and commute primarily by carpool can earn a monthly incentive worth \$20. Visit www.RideshareOnline.com or call 206-625-4500 or 1-800-427-8249.

Kitsap Transit and Washington State Ferries

Employees who commute using Kitsap Transit and WSF may purchase a monthly Kitsap Transit/WSF pass at a reduced price. To sign up, call 206-296-2710.

Home Free Guarantee

Employees who came to work by bus, train, carpool, vanpool, bicycle, or walking can receive a free taxi ride home in case of an unexpected need or emergency. To arrange an emergency ride home, call the ETP Hotline at 206-263-4575.

Other Benefits

- Zipcar
- Bike Station

From the Director

We're getting ready for the big one—are you?

Our department was really put to the test by the earthquake that shook our region in March.

What quake was that? An imaginary one, called Sound Shake '08. This regional exercise gave KCDOT and other agencies an opportunity to practice our disaster response plans and find out if we're ready for the real thing.

We learned a lot — and two important lessons stand out that concern both the department and you:

A back-up communication plan is essential. In the Sound Shake scenario, cell-phone and land-line communications were out for several days. We had to rely on backup communication devices to account for our employees, assess damage, organize our response and deploy our resources effectively.

After Sound Shake we clarified our emergency communication protocol for department leaders, and we are in the process of testing procedures.

We must be able to account for our employees. The Sound Shake exercise highlighted challenges we face in accounting for our most important resource—our employees. In an emergency, the first thing we will want to know is that you are safe.

After we have accounted for employees, we can begin to assess damage and determine what services we can provide to the public.

You can help by making sure the department has up-to-date contact information for you.

Do you have a personal plan for connecting with your family and other loved ones following a catastrophic event? Two things you can do are designate a meeting place and identify an out-of-state person who family members should call.

Don't put it off any longer—make a family plan. For some excellent tips about preparing for a crisis, visit the "3 Days, 3 Ways" Web site, www.govlink.org/3days3ways.



Harold S. Taniguchi
Director, Department of Transportation



Harold Taniguchi

TECHNOLOGY TAKES TO THE ROAD

Some King County roads are getting smarter. The Road Services Division is developing “intelligent transportation systems” (ITSs) that can ease traffic congestion, warn drivers of hazards, alert emergency responders about road incidents, and do much more to improve travel on county arterials.



Flora Lee monitors images transmitted from traffic cameras to the Traffic Control Center.

What are these systems and how do they work? They are combinations of equipment such as video cameras, traffic signals, weather sensors and changeable-message signs that are installed on roadways. These devices are linked by fiber-optic cable to computers in the Traffic Control Center (TCC) that Road Services has built in King Street Center. Engineers monitor the video images and other information sent to the computers. From the TCC they can remotely control traffic signals, electronic signs and other devices in response to what they learn.

For example, if the engineers detect an incident that is causing a long line-up of traffic at an intersection, they

can adjust the timing of a traffic signal to move more vehicles through. Or if a freeway incident causes traffic to detour onto an arterial, the TCC engineers can quickly change signal timing for the entire corridor to help relieve the temporary congestion. The county plans to someday have controls that automatically adjust signal timing in response to traffic volumes.

Future projects will install water sensors on flood-prone roads. When a sensor detects rising water, the system will automatically send a message to an electronic sign, warning drivers of flood conditions ahead. The Roads Maintenance staff will be alerted at the same time so they can place barricades on the road.

“ITS gives us an easy way to help motorists,” explained Road Services engineer Aileen McManus. “We don’t need to go out in the field to make adjustments. We can do it immediately from the TCC in downtown Seattle.”

McManus is the project manager of the ITS design and construction program and is also participating in regional ITS coordination. Norton Posey, supervising engineer in the Road Services Traffic Engineering section, is the visionary who started the program. Flora Lee manages the TCC and is responsible for operation of the ITS corridors and equipment. Behind the scenes are Dan Plute, ITS systems specialist, and Fred Housman, signal supervisor and ITS field specialist.

Projects underway

The ITS program began in 2004 when the division received a federal grant to construct the TCC. The grant also funded a project on Northeast 124th Street, which runs through Kirkland and

“ITS gives us an easy way to help motorists.”

—Aileen McManus, RSD engineer

over Interstate 405. This project coordinates signals owned by King County, Kirkland and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Another project coordinates 23 traffic signals in the Trans-Valley corridor, a six-mile arterial that runs between Southcenter Parkway and Southeast 151st Street in south King County. Road Services operates the signals remotely from the TCC. The project has been a big success, reducing travel time by as much as 30 percent. It also is remarkable in that it coordinates signals owned by a number of jurisdictions.

Road Services is just finishing up another ITS project, along Avondale and Novelty Hill roads in Redmond, and is designing others in the Kirkland, Juanita-Woodinville, Kent and Auburn areas.

Another application of this smart technology can be seen on Road Services' "My Commute" Web pages (find a link on www.kingcounty.gov/kcdot). These pages show images of busy intersections around the county, helping travelers plan their routes. "My Commute" is one of the Department of Transportation's most popular Web services.

Benefits for travelers, environment

The ITS program is contributing to many county goals. Besides giving travelers information, easing congestion, and helping Road Services work more efficiently, ITS also helps the environment. When traffic flows better, vehicles consume less fuel and emit less greenhouse gases.

The Road Services Division has developed a strategic plan for phasing in more ITS projects that will synchronize signals, provide weather and flood information to travelers and maintenance crews, and perform many other functions. The division also is working with other agencies on a regional plan for deploying ITS along key arterial corridors. The division will be seeking grant funding to pay for additional projects.

County inks partnerships to enhance bus service

King County Executive Ron Sims signed service partnerships between Metro Transit and 16 partner cities and businesses in April. The partners will make either direct financial contributions to add service, or roadway improvements to speed up buses. The agreements will result in four new bus routes, more trips on at least 25 existing routes, and street modifications that will improve transit speed and reliability on two RapidRide corridors.

The first four partnership service additions will begin this September. The remaining 11 will be phased in over the next five years.

The partnerships are part of the Transit Now initiative, a 10-year transit expansion plan approved by voters in 2006.



New Tolt Bridge opens

The Road Services Division officially opened the new Tolt Bridge on May 31.

The new bridge, which spans the Snoqualmie River west of Carnation, replaces a narrow, deteriorating bridge that is more than 80 years old. Road Services completed the \$28 million replacement project on time and on budget.

The new Tolt Bridge was built to meet today's travel demands while honoring the natural beauty of the lower Snoqualmie Valley. It was constructed in ways that protect and enhance the environment. One truss span lifts it above the surrounding wetlands, and the other truss span eliminated the need to place bridge supports in the river. During construction, Road Services took steps to protect river habitat and juvenile fish and opened up an old, narrow culvert to support fish passage.

Draft horses lead a procession of historic vehicles across the new bridge.

Airport to start taxiway project in July

The King County International Airport will start a \$12 million upgrade of one of its two taxiways, Taxiway Bravo, in July. Construction will last through September. A federal grant will cover part of the cost.

The taxiways function much like the ramps on a freeway, conveying planes from the hangars and tarmac parking to the two runways. Taxiway Alpha is located on the east side of the field, and Taxiway Bravo on the west. The Airport Division repaved and updated the main runway in 2006.



APPLAUSE



Dan Flynn

Dan Flynn has been named Vehicle Maintenance Employee of the Year for Metro Transit.

Flynn has worked in the body shop throughout his 28-year career at Metro.

Managers say Flynn is the “go-to person” in the shop, and is a great mentor to new employees.



Bob Rothwell

Bob Rothwell was recently honored by Metro for 35 years of safe driving.

Rothwell holds the longest current safety record for any full-time operator. Transit Operations Manager Jim O’Rourke said the achievement is all the more remarkable because Rothwell always chooses route assignments in downtown Seattle, where the traffic is the most challenging.

Windell Mitchell retired as director of the Fleet Administration Division at the end of April, after 35 years of service.

Mitchell instituted many measures to increase productivity and improve employee skills and service. Under his leadership the Fleet Division acquired hybrid vehicles, adopted cleaner fuels, and helped organize a consortium of public agencies that is promoting green government fleets.

Metro’s North Base employees received a trophy from KCDOT Director Harold Taniguchi for achieving Metro’s best collision-reduction record for 2007. The award was presented April 11 at the annual safety-award breakfast, where Metro General Manager Kevin Desmond, Transit Operations Manager Jim O’Rourke and North Base Chief Tutti Compton showed their



Showing off the Safety Award with Department Director Harold Taniguchi (left) are (L to R) transit operators Tammy Mason, Don Brady and Sandy Sailand, and mechanic Kurt Sutphin.

appreciation for employees by flipping pancakes.

Scoring for the annual transit safety award counts any collision between buses and fixed objects and other vehicles. North Base achieved a 25.5-percent collision reduction.

Metro Transit achieved the highest percentage ridership increase of all large bus transit agencies in the United States for 2007, the American Public Transportation Association has announced.

Metro’s 2007 bus ridership was 109,511,400—a 7.5-percent growth over 2006 ridership.

Overall bus service for the entire nation rose only 1 percent in 2007.

Metro also enjoyed record growth in its VanPool and VanShare programs.

The Roads Maintenance Section of the Road Services Division is participating in Puget Sound Energy’s (PSE’s) Green Power Program at the 100 Percent Leadership Partner level—the highest possible level—for 2008. This means that all of the section’s power comes from renewable energy sources.



Road Services Division Director Linda Dougherty (left) and Maintenance Manager Debbie Arima placing a green power decal on the "A" Building at the Roads Maintenance Facility in Renton.

Under the Green Power Program, Roads Maintenance pays a monthly fee that supports PSE's efforts to expand the use of power generated from renewable, environmentally sound resources such as solar, wind and biomass energy. The fee is based on actual energy usage and is expected to be approximately \$20,000 for all of 2008.

Many other public agencies and businesses participate in the Green Power Program.

Briggs take the wheel at Fleet

Met Mary Jo Briggs, the new director of the Fleet Administration Division.

Briggs has had a long career in public administration. It began when she took a temporary job with the City of Vancouver, Washington. Twenty years later, she was still there, having risen to the position of deputy city manager. Briggs left that position to run her own consulting business, and later was city manager of Fairview, Oregon. Prior to joining the county in May, Briggs was city administrator for Bainbridge Island, where she lives and enjoys sailing with her husband.

Her goals for the Fleet division? "Continue our strong customer service and take it to the next level. Our partners need us at their sides as they try to manage their budgets," she said. "Second, look for ways to take our environmental initiative in new directions. And third, to create a really strong team that can be a resource to others. Fortunately I inherited a really good staff."



Mary Jo Briggs

Road Services engineer is Hall of Famer

Aileen McManus, an engineer in the Road Services Division, was inducted into the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association's Hall of Fame in April.

According to the WIAA, McManus was one of Washington's "most dominant all-around high school athletes," who helped transform girls sports from a novelty to mainstream athletics.

McManus, class of 1984, led her Reardan High School basketball team to the Class B state tournament all four years, winning a championship, two runner-up finishes and a third-place trophy. She was named honorable mention All-American by USA Today



in her senior season, when she averaged 23.3 points per game. McManus also won two state titles in volleyball and competed in the state track meet her sophomore and junior seasons, placing fifth in both the javelin and 800-meter events.

She went on to play on scholarship for the University of Washington and made four NCAA tournament trips, including Sweet 16 appearances in her junior and senior years. She was team co-captain in her senior season, when the team won the Pac-10 championship.

After college, McManus was a winning girls basketball coach at Roosevelt High School for nine years, and was named KingCo 4A Coach of the Year for the 1997-98 season.

These days? McManus recently completed her first half-marathon run. Read about her innovative professional work on page 4.



Aileen McManus



PEMCO Webster & Stevens Collection, Museum of History & Industry (MOHI) Seattle.



**Crowd and planes
at dedication of
Boeing Field, Seattle,
July 1928**

Time flies!

It's been 80 years since 4-year-old William E. Boeing, Jr. sat on his father's lap during the dedication ceremony that opened Seattle's first airport in 1928. On the weekend of July 25 he will return to Boeing Field to help celebrate eight decades of aviation. Saturday, July 26, will be a day of fun including historic aircraft on

display, visits to the Museum of Flight, scenic flights, fly-overs and an aircraft pull hosted by Big Brothers Big Sisters. Visit www.kingcounty.gov/airport for more information.

Metroadeo showcases operator skills

Looking for something different to do? Head on down to the Metroadeo, to be held **Saturday, June 21, at 9 a.m.** at Metro's Tukwila Training and Safety Center, 11911 East Marginal Way S.

The Metroadeo, part of Metro's driver safety program, is a competition in which transit operators show off their skills.

The driving portion of the roadeo is held on a course with 11 problems, such as following a serpentine path, maintaining rear-wheel clearance between 10 tennis balls, and driving at a constant speed through a narrowing clearance marked by water barrels. Judges score competitors who must drive 40-foot coaches through the course within seven minutes.

The competition also includes non-driving events, such as using a wheelchair lift correctly.

The winner of the Metroadeo will go to the Washington State Roadeo and possibly on to the American Public Transportation Association International Roadeo, which will be held at the Tukwila Training and Safety Center next year.

Employees will hold a classic vehicle show in the parking lot on the day of the Metroadeo.



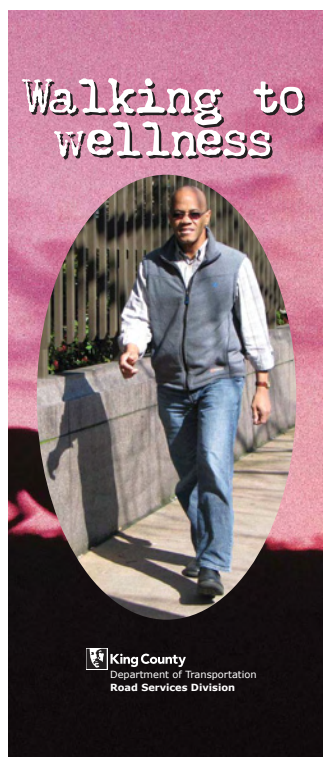
**A driver maneuvers through the
course at last year's Metroadeo.**

The Road Services Division has issued a challenge to its employees: start a personal walking program and walk the equivalent distance of the county's unincorporated road system—approximately 2,000 miles.

It will take participants 500 days at 10,000 steps a day to achieve that goal.

The division gives a pedometer and log book to every employee who accepts the challenge.

Road Services also produced a brochure that offers tips and inspiration—including the story of employee Aaron Grimes, in CIP and Planning, who began walking at lunch last year and has dropped ten sizes.



If you have comments, story ideas, or submissions, please send them to sarah.driggs@kingcounty.gov or call 206-263-5277.

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Editor: Sarah Driggs
Designer: Jackie Phillips
Photographer: Ned Ahrens

Alternative Formats Available

206-263-3703 TTY Relay: 711

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